

NAVY SURGEON GENERAL OPENING REMARKS TO SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE – DEFENSE

Vice Adm. Forrest Faison, Navy surgeon general and chief, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery provided the following opening remarks to the Senate Appropriations Committee Defense subcommittee during a hearing on defense health programs and military medicine funding April 26. Remarks as prepared by Vice Adm. Forrest Faison

Chairman Shelby, Vice Chairman Durbin, distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to update you on Navy Medicine. America's Navy and Marine Corps are busy – deployed and operating forward around the world and I want you to know that the men and women of Navy Medicine are serving with them and providing world-class care, anytime, anywhere. On behalf of the Navy Medicine team, we remain grateful to you for the strong support and confidence you have placed in us.



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While my written statement provides a detailed overview of Navy Medicine, I want to emphasize that our greatest responsibility continues to be readiness and support of a highly deployed Navy and Marine Corps team. To this end, we are preparing Navy Medicine and working closely with our sister services and the defense health agency for the future fight and forging a system of integrated readiness and health.

To ensure our personnel can meet the demands of combat casualty care in the maritime environment and a very different fight from OIF/OEF, we must leverage new critical training and skill sustainment opportunities. Much of the success that we saw in saving lives on the battlefield during our most recent conflicts can be directly attributable to the heroic work of our first responders – hospital corpsmen. To address these emerging challenges, we launched a series of comprehensive programs targeted at preparing our corpsmen to meet their lifesaving missions whether at sea aboard a destroyer or embedded with Marines. Specifically, we:

- *Modernized and expanded our hospital corps "a" school curriculum*
- Established new personnel qualification standards

- Deployed a “connected corpsmen in the community” pilot project to increase the competencies and confidence of our corpsmen
- And developed a trauma training partnership with the Stroger Hospital of Cook County to provide our corpsmen with experience at a top level I trauma center. ***Senator Durbin, we are grateful for your support of this initiative.***

We have also identified an opportunity to expand trauma capabilities within Navy Medicine as the naval medical center Camp Lejeune is actively pursuing designation as a Level III trauma center. This effort will result in increased readiness and skill sustainment for all our providers.

We continue to embed our mental health providers directly with the operational fleet and marine forces to support our Sailors and Marines. These efforts reduce the distance between providers and those seeking help, decrease stigma and improve resiliency. In addition, we are keenly focused on the importance of providing immediate support to psychological traumatic events that occur in the operational environments. Most recently, we deployed our special psychiatric rapid intervention teams – sprint – to support the crews and families of USS McCain and Fitzgerald following the ship collisions in the Pacific last year. Mental health issues after complex or catastrophic events frequently do not appear until later, sometimes much later. To address this, we have also implemented new tracking registries for survivors to ensure that, as they continue to serve, they have rapid and ready access to mental health services when and where needed, regardless of future assignment.

Navy Medicine continues to conduct world-wide research and development in support of our warfighters and their deployment readiness. These efforts range from trials of a new malaria vaccine to assessing the threat of newly discovered viruses in far reaching corners of the world. Our researchers are also directly engaged with the naval aviation community in conducting vital research aimed at understanding and mitigating physiological episodes affecting aircrew in tactical jet aircraft.

As I speak to you this morning USNS Mercy, one of our 2 hospital ships, is participating in Pacific Partnership 2018, a major multilateral humanitarian civic assistance mission in the Indo-Pacific. She is currently in Sri Lanka – providing care in the region and working alongside our international partners. These missions are foundational to our global health engagement strategy and provide unmatched

training for our medical personnel to respond to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations, both domestically and around the world.

Navy Medicine is comprised of military and civilian personnel focused on caring for and protecting the health of Sailors, Marines and their families. Our success is based on these skilled and dedicated professionals and we appreciate your support in providing the special and incentive pays, authorities and resources needed to recruit and retain this talented workforce in a highly competitive marketplace.

In closing, my guiding principles to the men and women of Navy Medicine remain consistent: (1) honor the trust placed in our hands to care for America's sons and daughters; (2) honor the uniform we wear; and (3) honor the privilege of leadership. The men and women of Navy Medicine live these principles every day and make me proud beyond words.

Again, thank you for support and I look forward to working with you during these transformational times in military medicine.